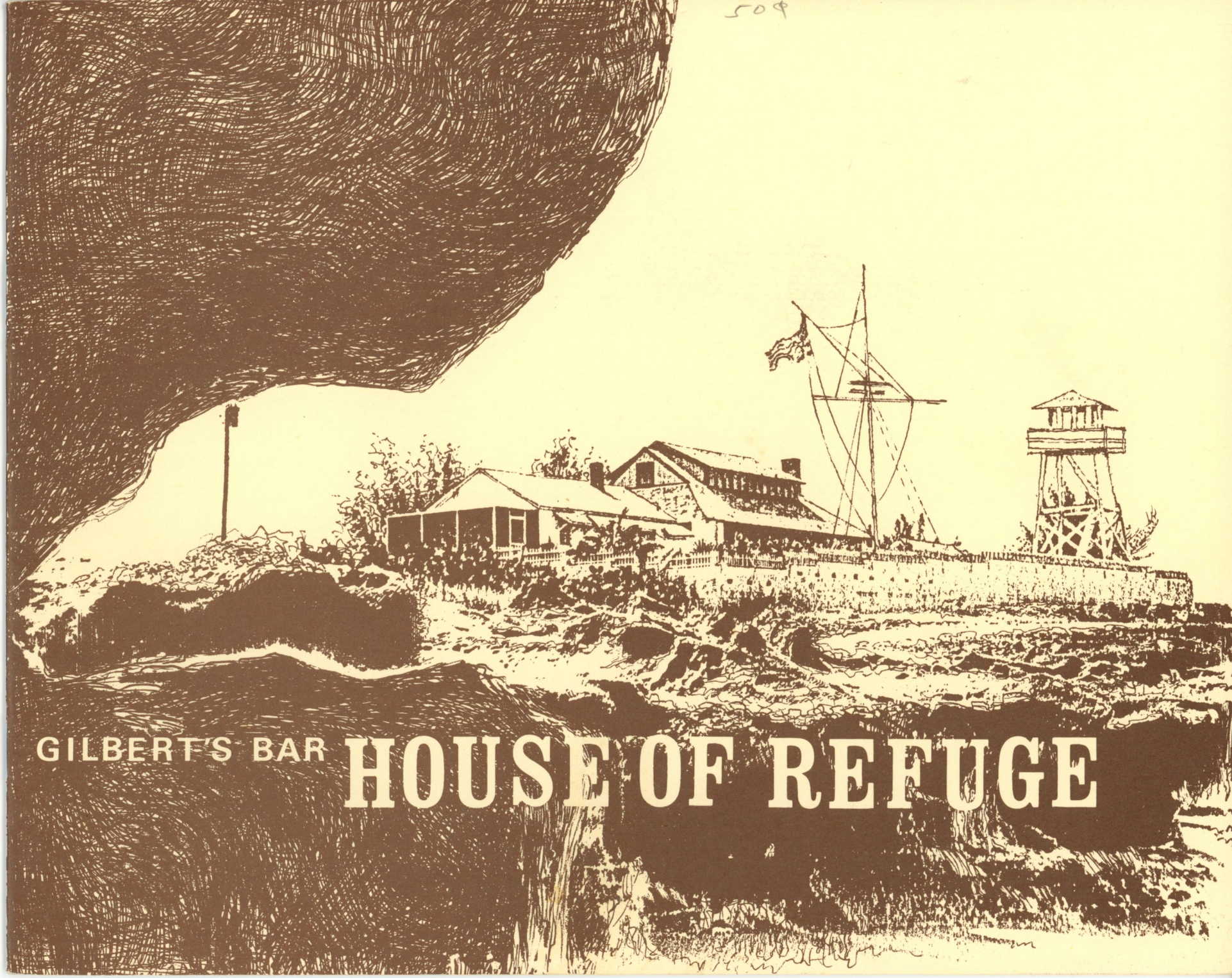

GILBERT'S BAR
HOUSE OF REFUGE

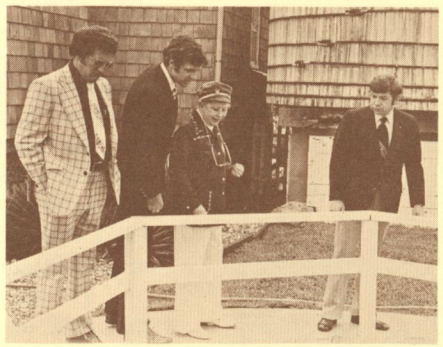


ABOVE: Georges Valentine, *767-ton bark out of Camogli, Italy, carrying lumber. Wrecked October 16, 1904, 8:20 p.m. 500 yds. east of House.*

FRONT COVER: *Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge, ocean side, seen through rocks.*



This brief story of the Restored Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge (listed on May 8, 1974, on the National Register for the Preservation of Historic Places), located at the south end of beautiful Hutchinson Island, Stuart, Florida, is dedicated to Mrs. William Clark Shepard long a permanent resident of the Island, who chaired the $100,000-Restoration Fund-raising effort, undertook the acquisition of the authentic interior contents and furnishings, the supervision of the landscaping, and, finally, was on hand to greet the visiting dignitaries at the formal re-opening in 1976, an American Bicentennial gift to the sea . . . its years-long and continuing adversary!*

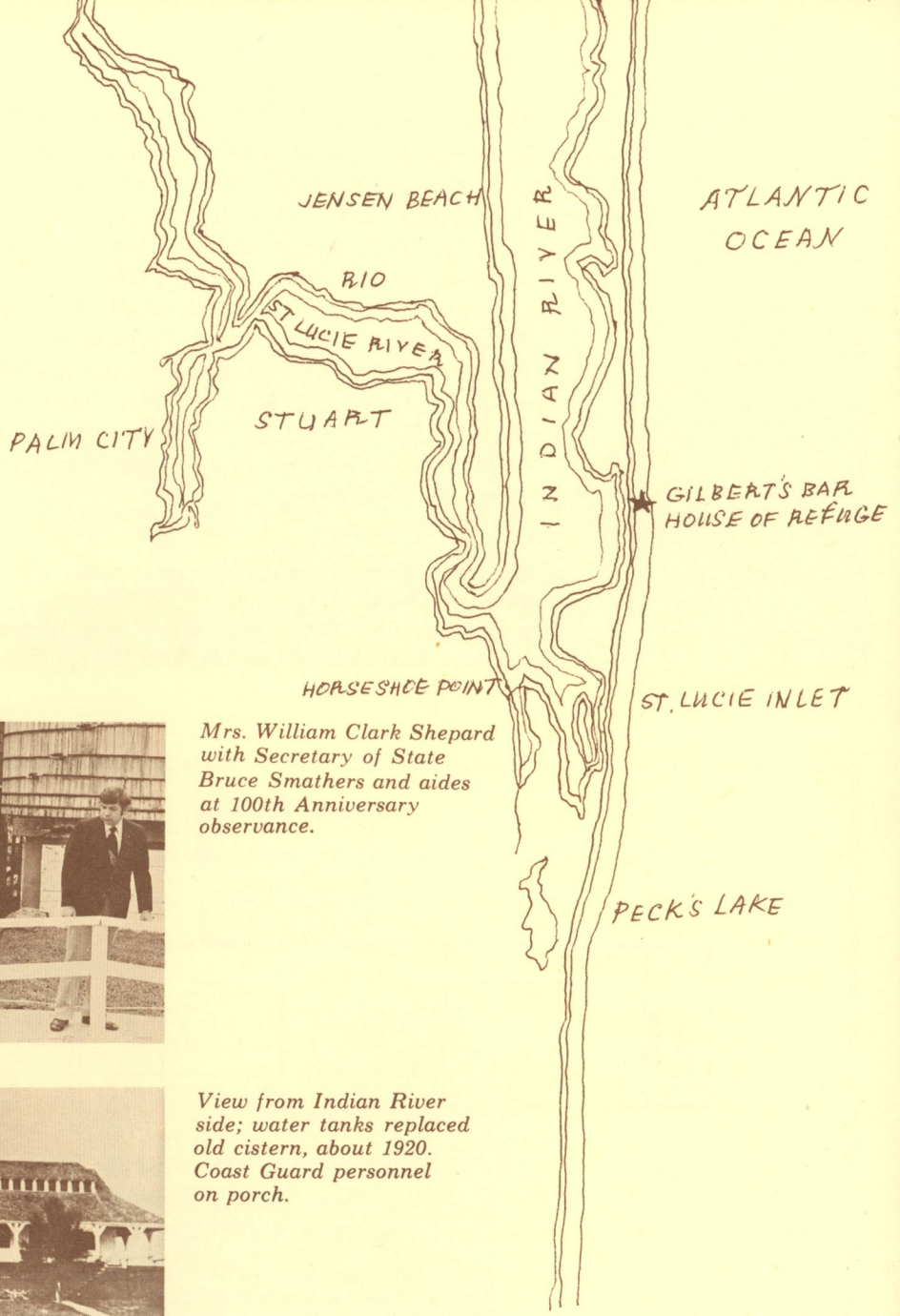


Mrs. William Clark Shepard with Secretary of State Bruce Smathers and aides at 100th Anniversary observance.



View from Indian River side; water tanks replaced old cistern, about 1920. Coast Guard personnel on porch.

*Deceased July 3, 1978



"Sealed proposals for the construction of five Houses of Refuge on the Florida East Coast were to be received at the Treasury Department, Washington, D.C., up until noon of Tuesday, June 29, 1875. Specifications and plans could be obtained at the office of the Collector of Customs at Bangor and Portland, Maine, Boston, Wilmington, North Carolina, Fernandina, Jacksonville, Key West, and Pensacola, Florida, as well as Captain J. N. Merryman, Inspector of the Life Saving Stations, 16 Broadway, New York City, as well as direct application to the Treasury Department — "

.... so read the advertisement in newspapers all along the East Coast of the United States.

"On October 25, 1875, the contract was signed between Albert Blaisdell of Boston, and the U. S. Treasury for five Houses of Refuge on the Florida East Coast, each to cost $2,900 dollars."

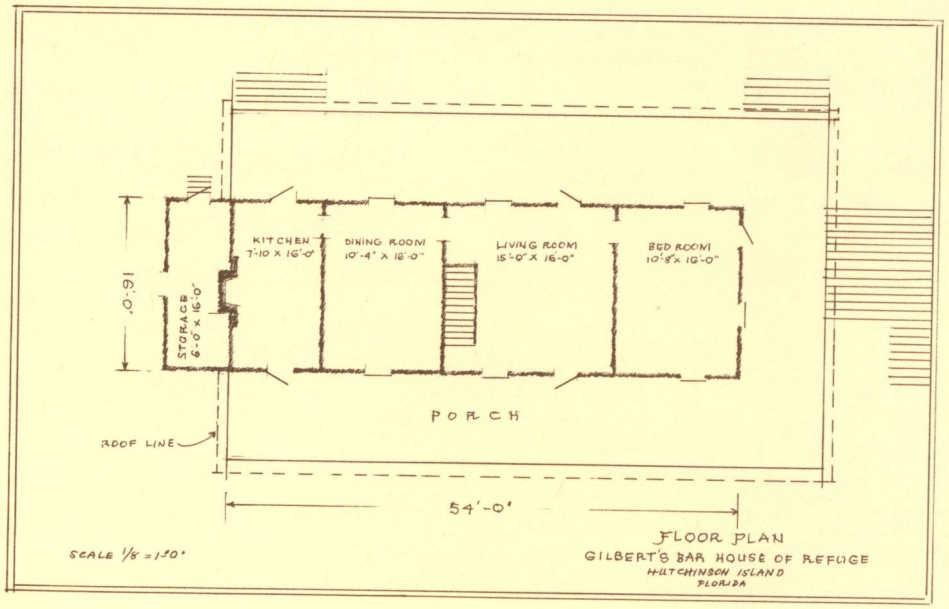
This — known as the Gilbert's Bar Station — was the second one built, and is the only remaining restored House of Refuge in Florida today.

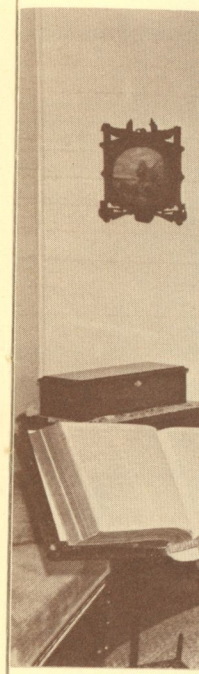
Officially opened December 1, 1876, under the United States Life-Saving Service (later to be merged with the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service to become the U. S. Coast Guard), its first Keeper, Fred Whitehead, was appointed by the Treasury Department. He served his lonely vigil for the sum of $40 a month, walking the miles of beach often through violent storms, ready to aid all distressed at sea within his appointed patrol, fighting hurricane-force winds . . . mosquitoes . . . sandflies . . . wild animals . . . slithering snakes — with no way to reach the mainland for supplies except by boat across the Indian River.

This House of Refuge has served through three wars: the Spanish American, World War I (as a Coast Guard Beach Patrol Station), and World War II (under the jurisdiction of the U. S. Navy). It was deactivated in 1945. Thus abandoned to the elements, forlorn, vandalized, and battered, it stood — and withstood — until William Clark Shepard of Cleveland (whose parents were winter residents of Stuart) resolved to purchase it for his home. Then began the long historic research that resulted in the County of Martin, in 1953, purchasing the site for $168 — ten dollars an acre for 16.8 acres. At the time of the 1975 restoration, the 16.8 acres had a book value of $1,500,000.

It was the County's intention to preserve the property as an historic landmark — the oldest standing structure in the county — by converting it into a museum. This was accomplished by the formation of the Martin County Historical Society in 1955, an organization sponsored by the newly established Soroptimist Club of Stuart.

The Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge (so named for the notorious Don Pedro Gilbert, whose piracy plagued these waters in the early 1800s) is owned and supported by the County of Martin, under the administration of the Martin County Historical Society.









ABOVE: *Hand tooled leather bound Bible, 1885; cast iron stand 1898; working music box, 1899; working calendar clock "Regulator"; ship's lantern; 1878 walnut rocker; bow back Windsor armchair; painting of Civil War Federal soldier wearing Zouave uniform.*

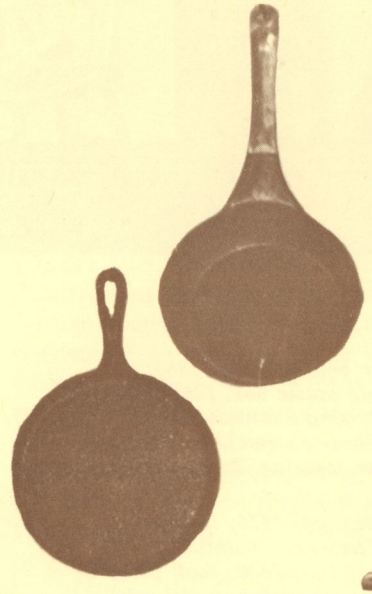
ABOVE RIGHT: *Victorian settee, ca. 1875; tilt-top candlestand, 1780-1840; "Theorem" painting, oil stenciled on white velvet, 1800-1830, took place of stitchery as "essential in the curriculum of schools for highly genteel females."*

RIGHT: *Fall-front mahogany veneer bureau-desk with maple sides and skirt, ca. 1840-1860; Chinese export teapot of 1700s; Delft tobacco jar; Battenburg lace scarf; binoculars used by first Keeper. Oil painting,* The Revenue Cutter, *by Bruce Elliott Roberts.*

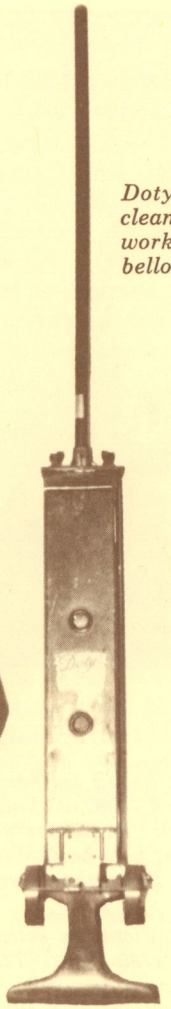




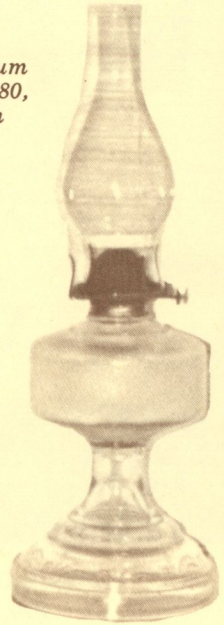
Restored 1876 fireplace, bricks from Shepard estate in Stuart; wrought iron crane holding copper gooseneck teakettle; iron cooking kettle; brass ball top andirons; butter churn, 1890; Admiral Dewey shelf clock (working), 1899; hurricane lamps; storage cupboard; breadbox; small waffle iron for use on crane; brass candlesticks with push-up.



Long handled frying pan; iron griddle; dipper.



Doty vacuum cleaner, 1880, works with bellows.



Kerosene lamp.

Mahogany spool drop-leaf table ca. 1820-1840; English Spode china "Buttercup pattern" 1895; hand embroidered linen tablecloth; Victorian oval mirror; mahogany side table ca. 1860. Mannequin in basic turn-of-century costume in this area. (See photograph of Mrs. Hubert Bessey in Boathouse.)



rosene lamp.

leaf table
Spode china
895; hand
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mahogany side
quin in basic
e in this area.
rs. Hubert

INSET: *Round-topped trunk ca. 1870, tin on wood with wooden bands. Hand painted side chairs, 1860-1870.*



INSET: *Hair wreath, 1870, made of human hair from members of the family.*

Basin and
floral desi
ca. 1890.

Mahogany spool
hand woven cove
Captain's chair c
quilt; cherry lam
made by a little
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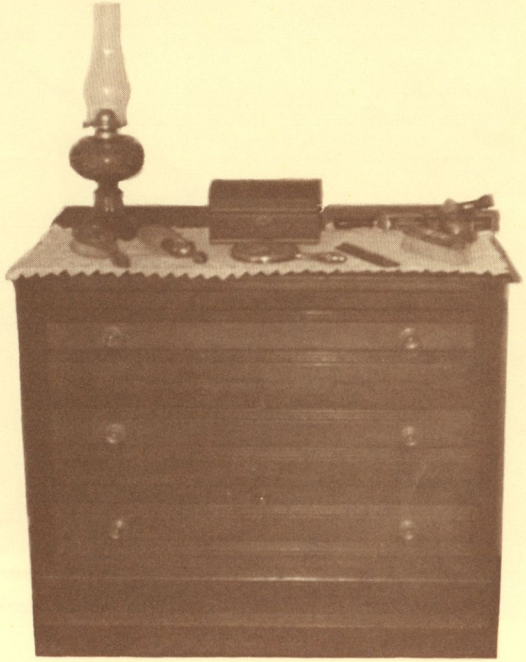
Mahogany spool bed ca. 1840-1870; hand woven coverlet ca. 1820; Captain's chair ca. 1890; white cotton quilt; cherry lampstand; sampler made by a little girl who was 10 years old in 1880.



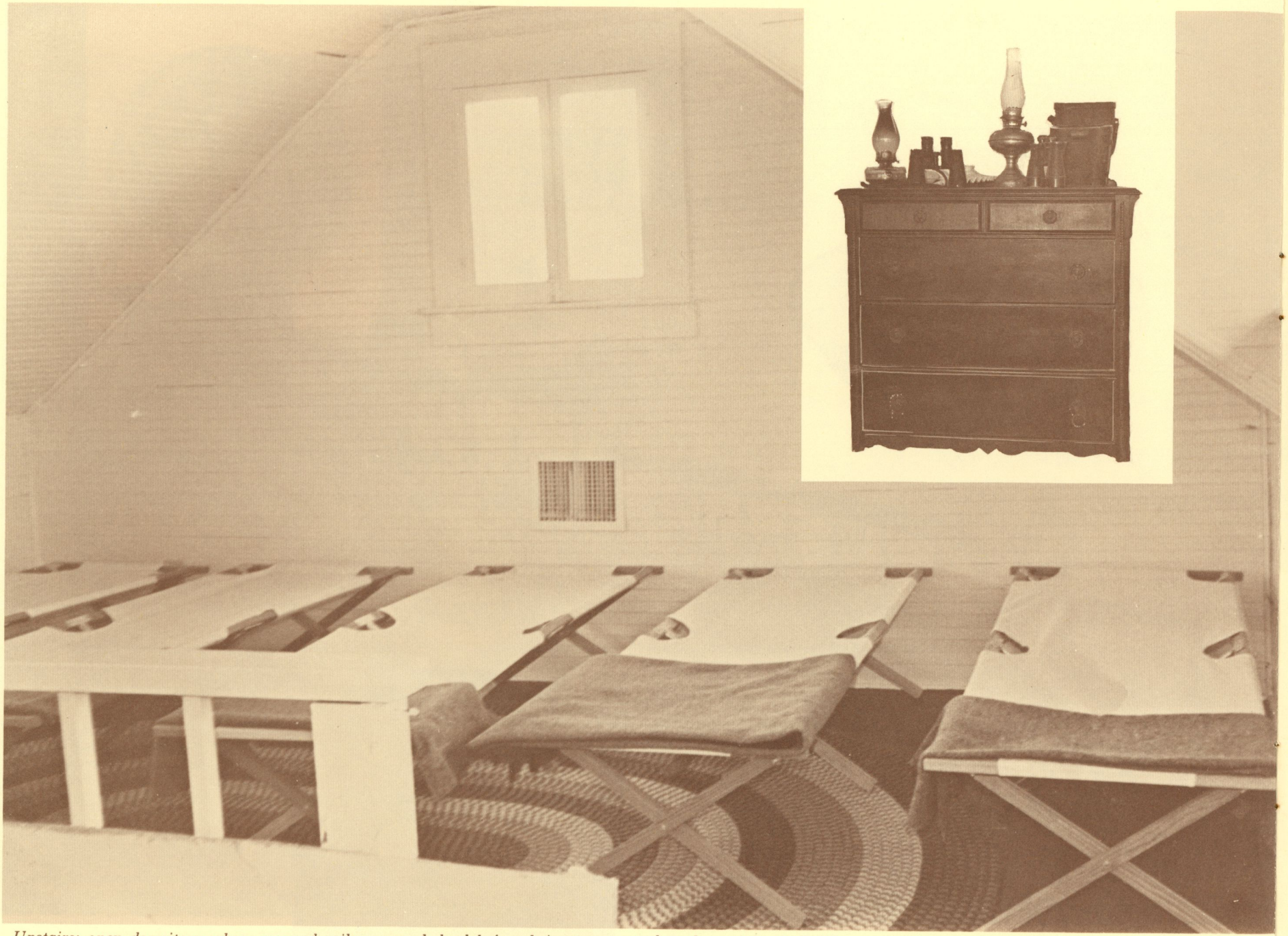
Basin and pitcher, floral design, ca. 1890.



Walnut washstand ca. 1900; hand woven linen towels; oak commode with carpeted lift-top lid, chamber pot.



Chest of drawers, or bureau, 1890, with original hardware; dresser set, 1900, plated silver; oval gilt frame mirror, ca. 1900.

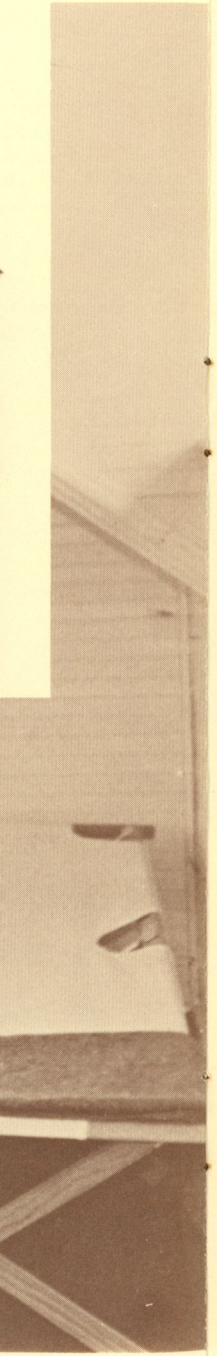


Upstairs: open dormitory where rescued sailors were lodged before being transported to the mainland. Folding cots, blankets. Closed to public.

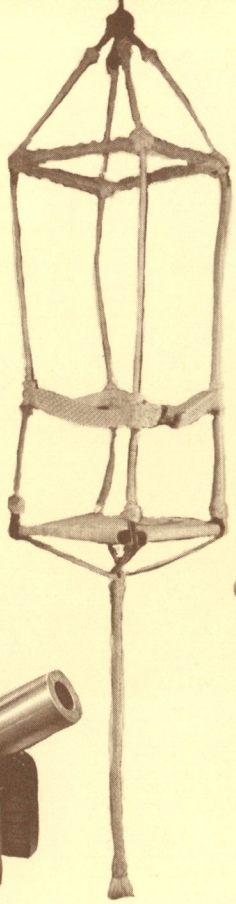
INSET: *Chest in dormitory with kerosene lamps; Coast Guard binoculars ca. 1914.*

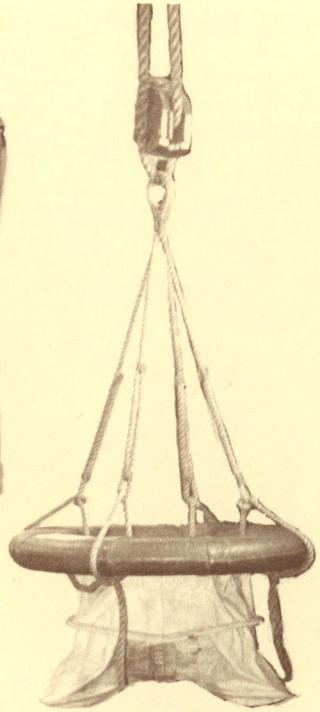
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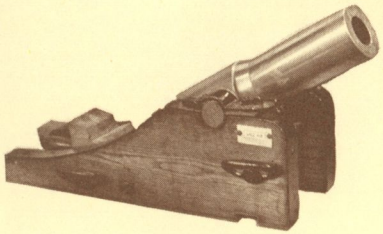


Captain's Chair, used to transport officers from ship-to-ship or ship-to-shore.





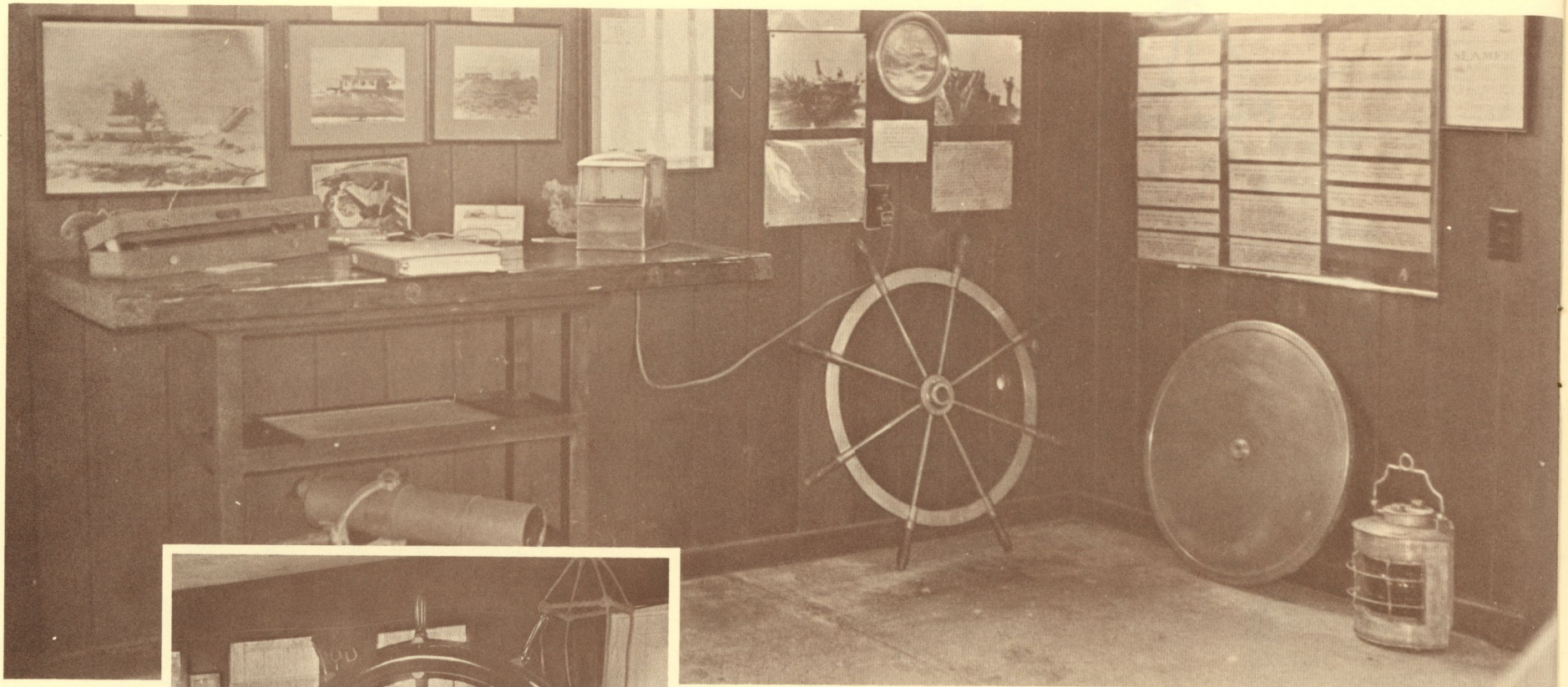
Breeches buoy, for rescuing people at sea.



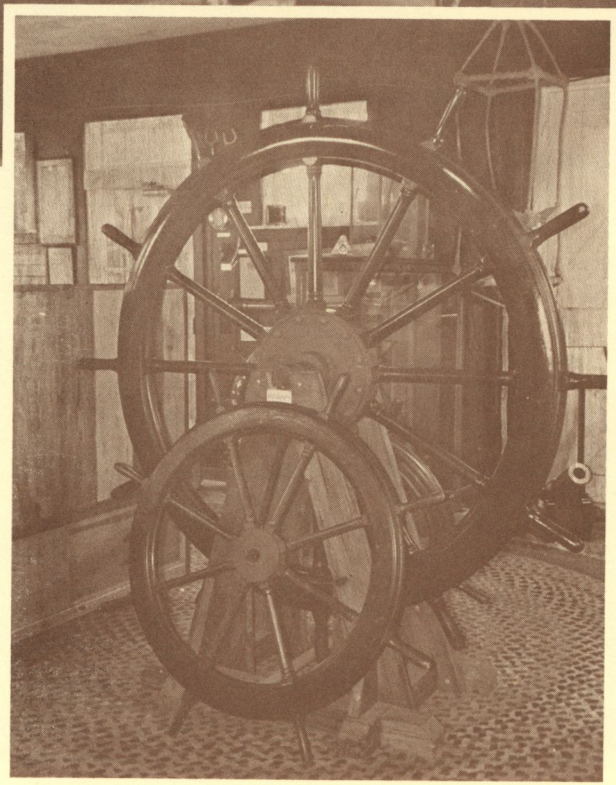
Lyle Gun, invented by Lt. David A. Lyle, 1877. Used to fire lines from shore to ship, or to fire paddle missiles in foreign languages to or from distressed vessels. Fired at House of Refuge 100th anniversary commemoration in 1975.

Carpenter's Bench with woodworking tools, used by Keepers. Early fishing rods, gift of Isaak Walton League of Stuart. Old charts. Ship models made by Keeper Bessey, who built both boats and houses, and was the area's first homesteader, 1883.



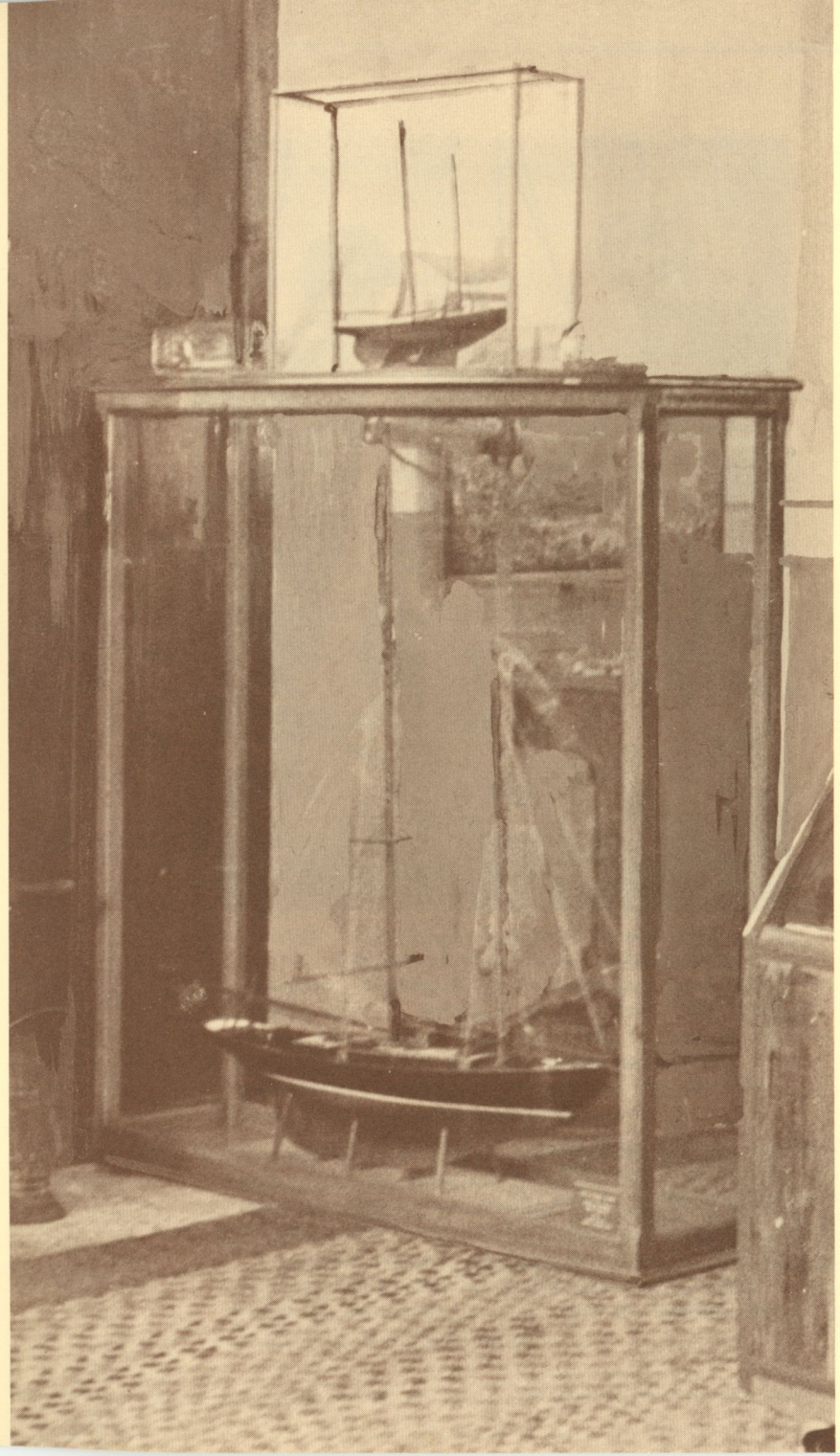


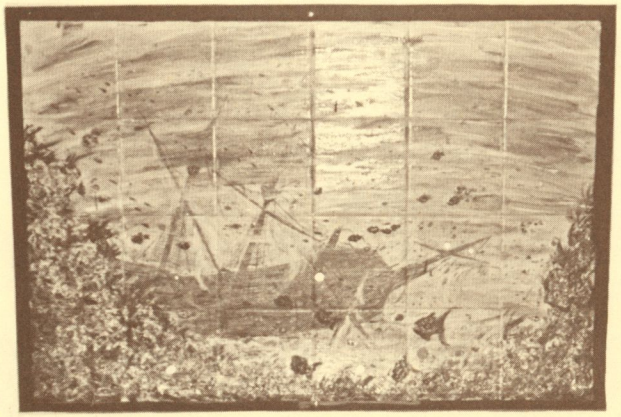
Hatch cover used to hold nautical display. Compass set in gimbals; spyglass for watch officer; binoculars; ship's riding light.



Steering wheel from USS Tennessee, *1919. Small ship's wheel, solid mahogany.*

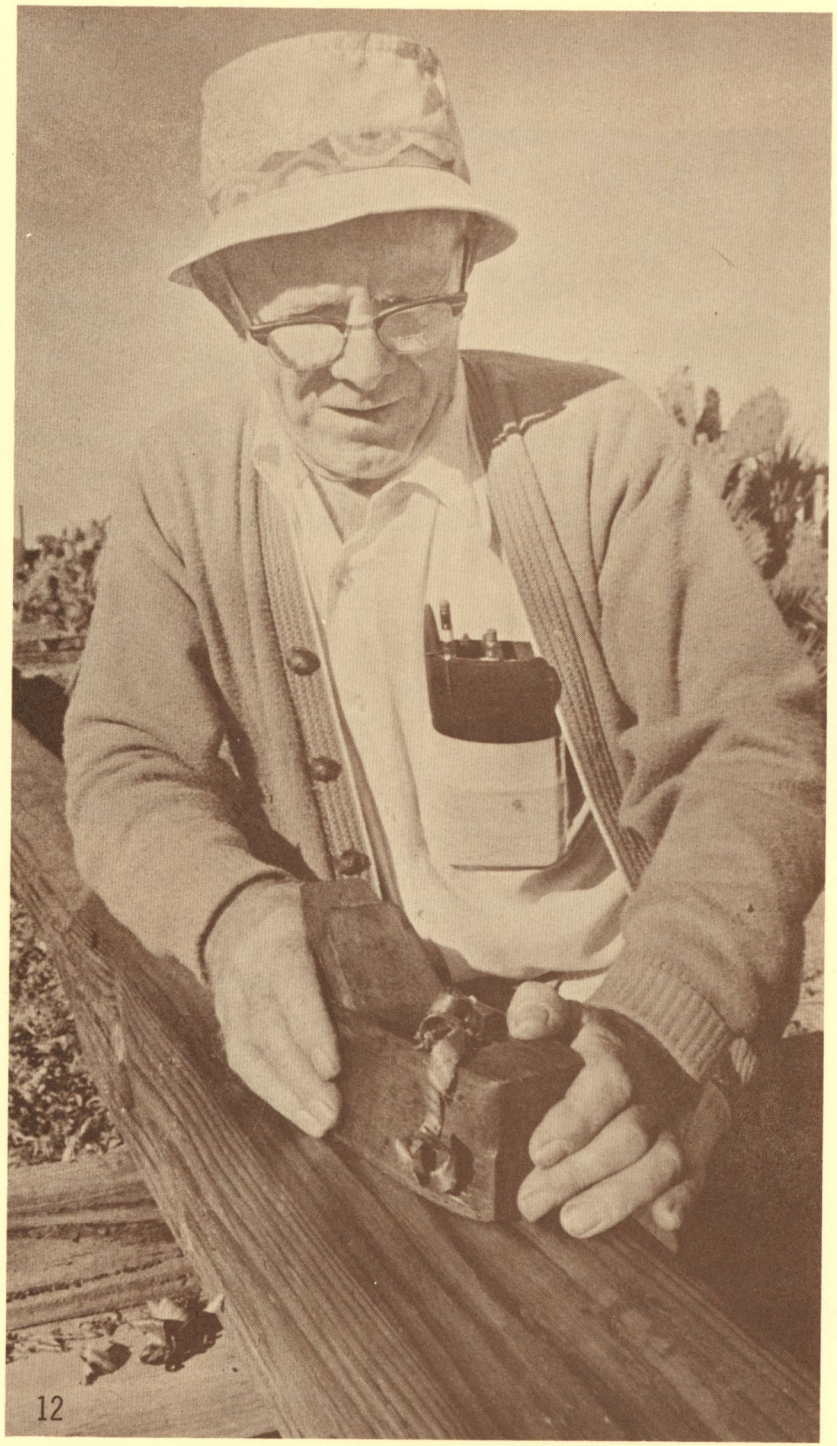






Ceramic tile picture of sunken Spanish galleon. Case not seen holds pottery, figurines from El Infante. *40,000 year old sea shells excavated on Hutchinson Island. Lantern from bow of tanker* Gulfland, *burned off Hobe Sound, October 1943.*

Model of schooner Volante *(below); model of schooner* Gertrude L. Thebaud *(above).*





Flagpole, struck by lightning, required new handmade truck. Patrick G. Kenny and Robert Fenton completing repairs, June 1977.

Patrick G. Kenny, artist and master carpenter, sculpting the 45-foot, 900-pound ship's mast flagpole designed by him for the House of Refuge restoration, 1976. Kenny's oil painting of the House — the "official portrait" — hangs in the Boathouse, and appears on the cover of the Society's History of Martin County.

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GILBERT'S BAR STATION HOUSE OF REFUGE

1876 December 1, Gilbert's Bar Station activated.

1886 First large wreck. April 19. The *J. H. Lane,* a 371-ton brigantine out of Searsport, Maine, valued at $16,000. Bound from Matanzas, Cuba, to Philadelphia with a cargo of molasses. Wrecked 14½ miles north of Jupiter Lighthouse and 5½ miles SSE of Gilbert's Bar Station on a reef ¾ of a mile from shore. Time — 1:30 in the morning. Vessel a total loss; seven survivors.

1893 February 22. Sailboat in distress. Boat, one woman, two men saved.

1894 January 22. Sloop *Mattie* saved.

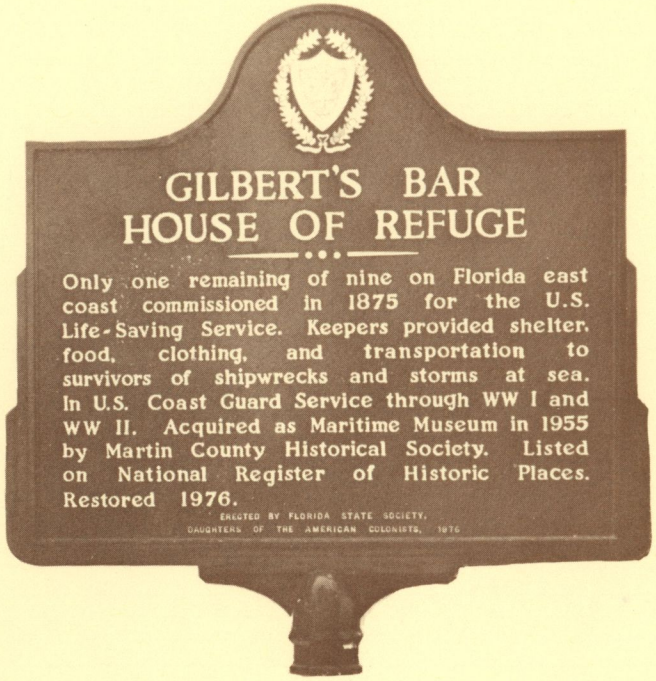
1895 February 21. Sloop capsized in heavy sea carrying surveying instruments. Captain saved; instruments lost.

1896 January 9. Sloop capsized by hitting sunken vessel. Crew and Captain saved, sheltered, fed, and boat repaired.

1901 August 9. Sloop *Thelma* carrying honey, stranded on reef. Honey and crew of three saved.

1904 October 16. 767-ton bark *Georges Valentine* from Camogli, Italy, 500 yards east of the House, carrying $17,000 worth of lumber stranded in hurricane. Keeper W. E. Rea rescued crew and captain after 12 hours of rescue work. Many houses have lumber from this wreck in portions of their construction. The wreck can be seen at times from the House of Refuge and is a favorite diving place for underwater enthusiasts.

1904 October 17. Gale still raging, storm increasing, rain pelting the 1,246-ton *Cosme Colzado* from Barcelona, Spain, was stranded 300 yards off shore, 3 miles north of the House, carrying a crew of 15 men and captain. All were saved by the Keeper and given food, clothing, and shelter before being taken to the mainland. The Spanish Ambassador was informed of their plight.



Marker presented by Daughters of the American Colonists.

1916 November. The 440-ton barkentine *St. Paul* went aground 4 miles north of the House. All saved.

1966 June. Two college students from Heidelberg, Germany, studying medicine, here on vacation, attempted to sail in a small boat from Palm Beach to the Bahamas. Sighted by Stephen G. Bishop (Keeper at Museum) at 5:30 in the morning. Boat and students saved.

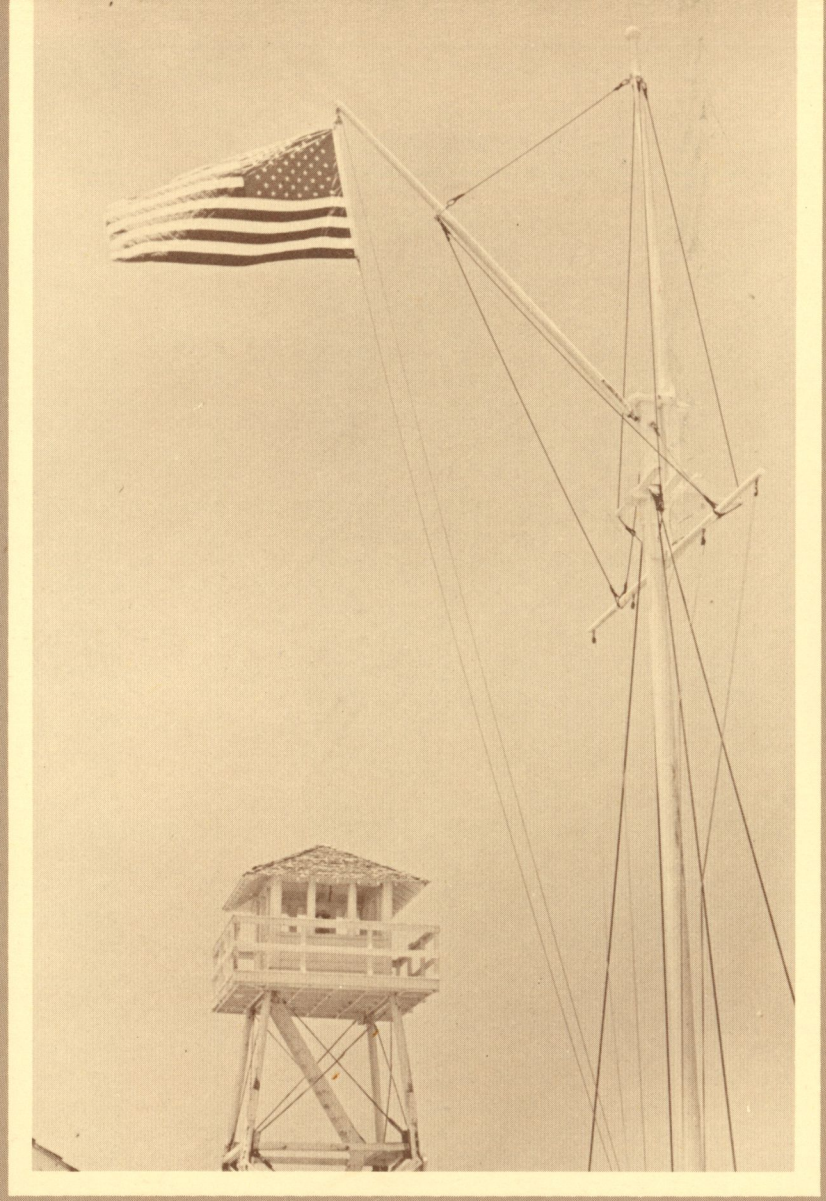
So, in spite of the Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge now being a museum, our Keepers are still alert to ships and men in distress at sea. We are an official "refuge" for the green turtle research conducted by the State Department of Natural Resources, and the Ralph Hartman Aquarium allows visitors to see examples of present day marine life taken from the Indian River . . . as the House of Refuge is between the River and the Ocean.

CREDITS:

Mahlon A. Cline, design and typography
Janet Hutchinson, text
Emeline K. Paige, editor
Louise Taulbee, photographs
Lee Walker, Helena A. Waller, consultants
Picture of Mrs. Shepard, Jefferson Siebert

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GILBERT'S BAR
1875
HOUSE OF REFUGE
FLORIDA

Ralph Hartman, Jr.
President



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